

OXFORD

MAGAZINE

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“Oxford Leading Together” was the title of the Vice-Chancellor’s Annual Oration at the start of this new academic year, the first of her tenure. Togetherness – or, more precisely, “we work *together* because we share a common purpose” – was the major theme. One senses that the V-C sees this as the solution to many of our problems. After her many bridge-building deep dive visits into departments and colleges she would already have a good feel for the general mood, and the speech was full of detail about leading current initiatives and achievements. She was lavish in her praise for our many and various recent successes and awards. To judge the vibes in the Sheldonian from facial expressions and the length of the applause, one would say that her words were very well received.

Of course the outlook is not all rosy. As the V-C stated, the recent staff experience survey “shows that many people feel valued and heard; but fewer are satisfied with pay, benefits and development opportunities”, now all the more relevant given the cost-of-living crisis. There is a gulf between the high-achieving public face of the University that Professor Tracey rightly emphasised, and the everyday lot of, let’s say, a college-only early career lecturer with debts to pay. To help the less fortunate she detailed policy initiatives currently in place, including establishing a “People Strategy group”, developing the “Academic Career and Reward Framework”, and the promise of the first conclusions of the “Pay and Conditions Report” due in December. Equally, student experience has triggered the “Oxford Financial Assistance” programme and, to counter widespread student anxiety – and remembering that “a quarter of the student population identifies as disabled or neurodiverse” – there are “Student Support

PEOPLE, PEOPLE, PEOPLE

Plans” and the newly enhanced Counselling Service.

At the point at which Professor Tracey asks “How might we work better together?”, having insisted once again that “Oxford’s devolved nature is one of its key strengths”, she interestingly and specifically points out that this “presents significant challenges to our professional services who, despite their dedication and hard work, are

struggling with a growing workload”. One response has been “Professional Services Together”, aiming at helping professional services colleagues “work as one even more joined-up community”, together with a strategic review of Professional Service now underway, to bring forward comprehensive plans “to drive the culture change we need, embedding trust at its heart, and with quality of service and value for money as a key goal”.

At last week’s Townhall meeting held by the Pay and Conditions review group, the most repeated theme was fixed term contracts, followed by pensions, against the background of the usual Oxford problems relating to housing, transport and childcare. The pressures on household budgets and worries about job security at the time of the cost-of-living crisis were made very clear in questions put to the review group members present. At this point the review is data collecting, benchmarking, gathering suggestions and deciding priorities. Virtually all the topics raised at the meeting will require new money if real changes are to be achieved.

In respect of these many and various initiatives it has to be said that the V-C has been energetically proactive within a very short space of time and that her priorities, with her background as “one of us”, will chime naturally with those of most staff. What must be the most overrid-

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...and much more

ing long-term policy concern is thankfully mentioned in the Oration in three different contexts; climate change. Here one might hope that Oxford can shape not just the conversations but provide and promote solutions well beyond local boundaries. What better challenge to bring us all together in a collective endeavour?

* * *

There was a second recurrent theme in the Oration for which quick fixes may be less easy to promise. “I have been surprised to discover how dilapidated some of our estate has become.” “[W]e have a business model to fund our great British universities which is not fit for purpose.” “I’ve gone rummaging around Wellington Square trying to find where all the money is hidden. I’ve yet to find it.” Funding and sponsorship are problems mentioned more than once.

It is a quirk of British politics that governments have tended to set up reports into Higher Education the implications of which their successors, from another party, have been left to pick up. As a ministerial portfolio, HE is marked by significant churn; it is at best a stepping stone to another, more significant brief. But, as noted on these pages, the Lords have identified their serious concerns about HE, and a new government – which is looking very

likely – will surely have to reform a funding model that currently works for no one. One would hope that Oxford, with its influence in so many areas of public life, and its own almost unique contribution to British politics, might be able to steer the conversation. A degree of scepticism about politicians seems to underpin the V-C’s proposals to take us towards the sunlit uplands: we can no longer rely financially on student fees or overseas students, so a new fund-raising campaign is about to be launched.

“We have several ambitious plans with Begbroke and Oxford Science Parks, Osney Mead, Oxford North, the Ellison Institute and our involvement at Culham and Harwell. However, I believe that there is a greater prize to be won that ties our ambition to secure Oxford as the most attractive place on earth to come and study, teach, research or work.” Although the V-C does not go so far as to say this, one hopes that glossy new buildings and fancy research posts we did not know we needed, are not what she has in mind for the new campaign. Supporting current and new staff, alongside students, must be the target. The nearly half a million alumni are clearly in her sights and they may be better bets than the billionaires usually looked to. Her initiatives centred on people and togetherness must not be allowed to replace glossy buildings with glossy unachievable overpromises.

B.B., T.J.H

Not the *Gazette*

NB The *Oxford Magazine* is not an official publication of the University. It is a forum for the free expression of opinion within the University.

The *Oxford Magazine* is edited by

**Tim Horder
&
Ben Bollig**

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Literary Editor:
Jane Griffiths at Wadham

Addressing Sexual Violence at Oxford

BRIDGET STEELE

Readers of *Oxford Magazine* may have seen the recent article in the *Observer* about sexual violence in UK universities. One of the interviewees for that piece is Dr Bridget Steele.¹ Dr Steele is an incoming departmental lecturer in the Department of Social Policy and Intervention, where she recently completed her DPhil. Bridget founded the OUR SPACE (Oxford Understanding Relationships, Sex, Power, Abuse, and Consent Experiences) study, the first study of its kind in the UK to investigate the prevalence and nature of sexual violence among higher education students. She conducts this research alongside Dr David Humphreys, an Associate Professor, also in the Department of Social Policy and Intervention. Their work on this topic has been featured in several academic publications, policy consultations, and media articles. OM spoke to Dr Steele about this work and the wider context.

OM: There seems to be a growing problem of sexual assault on university campuses. Your recent study in Trauma, Violence and Abuse found that a significant percentage of women experienced sexual assault in higher education.² Do you think that is true for Oxford?

Our recent review on the prevalence of sexual assault among higher education students found that on average 17.5% of women have experienced some form of sexual assault (rape, attempted rape, forced sexual touching, or coercive sex) when attending higher education. We found that the most common act of sexual assault experienced was forced sexual touching.

It is hard to say if sexual assault on university campuses is a growing problem or if the problem is just getting more attention from both researchers and policy makers. Evidence from the US seems to show that sexual assault among this population has been a problem for a long time, but in recent years, as a result of the efforts of activists and student groups, and building on the momentum of the #metoo movement, there is increasing pressure on universities to address this issue.

Our research suggests that sexual assault is prevalent in all academic institutions. The UK has been slower – compared to other countries – to take this issue seriously, despite the attempts of many researchers and students raising awareness of the problem. However, we are optimistic that the University of Oxford has taken a leadership role among institutions in the UK to support, fund, and champion rigorous academic research on sexual assault experienced by students. Until more universities measure and report the issue more systematically we will not be able to get a full scope of the problem in the UK context.

You report that Oxford is leading the way; in what respects exactly?

Oxford is leading the way by being one if not the first university in the UK to provide funding and resources to data collection on the issue of sexual violence and to allow for the research to be published and transparently reported on. Anna Bull (University of York) has written on how there has been a tendency of UK institutions to silence and embargo any data or research on sexual violence due to reputational risk.³

Further, Oxford has a dedicated sexual harassment and violence support service staffed with specialist case workers.⁴ This service publicly reports the number of students accessing the service each year.

What are the particular difficulties of responding to alleged assaults at UK institutions? Are these more noticeable here?

The way the legal and justice systems have traditionally responded to sexual violence allegations leaves many survivors disheartened. Many survivors choose not to report experiences of sexual violence to police to avoid re-traumatisation and even when they do report to law enforcement, most cases do not end in a conviction.

As a result, in the absence of legal system that can adequately and effectively handle reports of sexual violence, universities are being increasingly called upon to fill the gap.

It is a massive undertaking for universities to put in place policies and procedures to respond to reported assaults. Universities are not courts of law but are being asked to collect evidence, make decisions, and develop and enforce consequences. The challenges of doing this are discussed in the recent *Observer* article we contributed to. Key challenges include setting up a process that is both trauma informed and that offers supports to the victim, and at the same time is fair and just to the accused perpetrator, hiring and training personnel to respond and adjudicate on reports, and deciding on the consequences for being found ‘guilty’ of sexual violence.

I think there needs to be further conversation on what we can reasonably expect of universities. And if we have expectations that universities should respond to sexual violence effectively (which not even the legal system has figured out how to do), there needs to be substantial resources and expertise poured into this issue so that universities can dedicate the proper time and personnel to the problem. Without a full commitment to addressing this issue, the very systems designed to support survivors can end up failing them, causing them more harm.

What more needs to be done to encourage reporting of incidents?

Trust is so important when we discuss reporting. Students need to be able to trust that when they report, they will feel believed, supported, and empowered to make decisions on if and how they want to proceed with an investigation. Universities can work to improve trust with students by adequately resourcing staff positions that are filled with people who have the appropriate skill sets to deal with sexual violence reports and ensuring that the response to sexual violence reporting is coordinated across university departments and colleges, with clear referral mechanisms so that students are able to speak to these designated sexual violence response staff in a timely manner. Universities in the UK have begun this process, which is a positive sign. Once we have adequate infrastructure in place to support survivors who do report, we will see an increase in formal reporting of sexual violence that aligns more with the prevalence rates that we are seeing in anonymous surveys.

Are most cases of sexual violence student-student (what proportion?) or are we more worried about staff behaviour?

The majority of cases of sexual violence at universities occur between students. There are also instances of staff perpetrating sexual violence against students. This type of violence might look different than sexual violence between peers, due to the inherent power imbalances between staff and students and can have severe implications on student educational outcomes (among many other adverse consequences). The 1752 Group is a UK research and advocacy group dedicated to ending staff sexual misconduct in higher education which has fiercely campaigned to ban staff-student relationships in the UK.⁵ Oxford has taken the step to ban staff-student relationships but there is still an ongoing debate on this topic.⁶ One common criticism (and misconception) of staff-student relationship bans is that it would prohibit an employee of a university from pursuing an advanced degree or course from the university if their partner or spouse was also an employee of the university. It is important to note that even under bans, these types of relationships can be exempt if they are appropriately disclosed. The purpose of the bans is to first and foremost protect students from feeling coerced, pressured or pursued, and abused by staff, so they can pursue their education in a safe environment.

In the TVA piece, the figure for trans and gender-diverse people (18.1%) is even higher than that for cis-gender women (17.5%). What can universities do to help trans people who are at risk of or who suffer sexual assault?

Transgender and gender diverse people have been historically left out of research on sexual violence. A key contribution to our study is that we intentionally conducted separate analyses based on gender identity. Our review found limited research that reported sexual violence rates for transgender and gender diverse students. When we did analyse this small number of studies we found high rates of sexual violence. There is emerging evidence on sexual violence in the general population that helps support this

finding. We think that more research is needed that intentionally explores sexual violence across diverse gender identities to better understand the problem.

How do UK HE institutions compare to their US counterparts?

The US was the first country to implement a coordinated response to sexual violence at universities. This could partly be because the majority of research on sexual violence among this population has taken place in the US. It could also be a result of historical underlying philosophies guiding the provision of US higher education, in which the university takes on the responsibility of providing wrap-around support and care for students in the absence of their parents or guardians.

There is also federal legislation in the US (Title IX) which mandates that universities address and respond to sexual harassment and violence among staff and students. Such legislation does not exist in the UK. However, there has been increasing focus and intention paid to this issue by UK policy makers. For example, in 2016 and 2019, Universities UK released their Changing the Culture report, directly calling on institutions to utilise internal resources to address and respond to the problem of sexual violence among students.

The UK is now starting to get to a place where the US was about 5-10 years ago and hopefully will only see increasing attention, research, and policies dedicated to preventing and responding to sexual violence. There is evidence that UK institutions silence and embargo any data or research on sexual violence due to reputational risk.⁷ I think now we are getting to a place where it will be more of a reputational risk for universities in the UK to not be transparent about the problem and what they are doing to respond.

If the US is ahead of us what can we learn about good practice and skills in relevant staff? Are there any good resources (e.g. websites) on US practices?

There are many good practices we can learn and adapt from the US. For example, in the US higher education institutions consistently and routinely measure rates of sexual violence among students and the culture and climate related to sexual violence, and transparently report on the findings. For just one example of the sheer scope of data collection happening in the US, readers can look at the work being done by the Association of American Universities.⁸ Further, every higher education institution in the US is mandated to have a trained coordinator who oversees all complaints of sex discrimination including sexual violence and identifies and addresses patterns or systemic issues that arise during reviews of these complaints.

However, it is important to note that we need to think critically about what practices from the US should and should not be adopted in the UK context. For example, in US universities, there has been a widespread implementation of a policy that mandates university employees to officially report and escalate any sexual misconduct they hear or learn about to a designated university staff who will conduct an investigation, including the names of the victim survivor and perpetrator.⁹ Employees are required

to do this even if the victim survivor does not want a report to be made. While the intention of this policy was likely to take all acts of sexual violence seriously, it has been subject to harsh criticism by victim advocates who say that this approach takes power away from survivors of sexual violence who want to be supported but who don't want to go through a reporting process.

Could more be done to educate students on the issue of consent? This has been cited as a problem is cases of so-called “sexual choking” and other sadistic behaviour – the misunderstanding, or supposed misunderstanding, that to consent to sex is to consent to any type of sexual activity that one party might like to engage in, regardless of the other’s wishes.

Consent education is an essential component to reducing instances of sexual violence. Consent education must start at an early age, be consistently reinforced throughout children, youth, and young adult’s education. We must also think about providing training to parents, guardians, and educators, to help youth understand the complex and nuanced aspects of consent. We know that much of the media around sex and the pornography that youth and young adults are exposed to contains sexual violence, violence against women, and/or elements of child pornography. As a result, certain criminal practices such as sexual strangulation can start to become normalised. It is a massive task to try and develop educational programming to combat this, but it is an important step. There is also work that needs to be done at a policy and regulatory level to reduce youth exposure to violent and criminal sexual behaviour.

What could the Office for Students do, if anything, to help?

I currently sit on the advisory group task force for the Office of Students on measuring sexual violence in higher education. The OfS is currently dedicating considerable time and resources to measure incidences of sexual violence across many institutions in the UK and we are proud that the tool we developed for our study at Oxford is being used and adapted in this process.

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/sep/17/hardcore-porn-choking-and-universities-left-to-tackle-rising-tide-of-sexual-assaults>
2. Steele, B., Martin, M., Sciarra, A., Melendez-Torres, G. J., Degli Esposti, M., & Humphreys, D. K. (2023). The prevalence of sexual assault among higher education students: a systematic review with meta-analyses. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 15248380231196119.
3. <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/11/8/373>
4. <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/supportservice>
5. <https://1752group.com/>
6. For the University policy, see <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-student-relationships#collapse4067531>; on the wider debate, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/dept/should-universities-ban-staff-student-relationships>.
7. “Researching Students’ Experiences of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Harassment: Reflections and Recommendations from Surveys of Three UK HEIs,” Anna Bull, Marian Duggan, and Louise Livesey. *Social Sciences* <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11080373>.
8. <https://www.aau.edu/newsroom/press-releases/aau-releases-2019-survey-sexual-assault-and-misconduct>
9. <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2116515118>

NOTICE

The Editors of the *Oxford Magazine* regret that they cannot publish any material submitted to them anonymously. If the author requests publication on the basis that the author’s name and university address be withheld from the readership, the Editors will consider the reasons given and in their discretion may publish on that basis; otherwise the material will be returned to the author.

The next issue of *Oxford Magazine* will appear in fifth week

Notes from Ivory Flats

ROBERT FOLEY

Are you sure that boat is safe, Mr Darwin?

A favourite academic quotation of mine is that ‘knowledge is bought with assumptions’. Very true, but it is also bought with effort, and sometimes that effort involves risks. Reading the memoirs of early scientific travellers – Wallace, Humboldt, Shackleton – is enough to make most of us check the house for mosquitoes or turn up the central heating. Herbert, the brother of Alfred Wallace, co-founder with Charles Darwin of the theory of evolution, died of yellow fever after travelling with Wallace in the Amazon¹, and reading the records of the explorers looking for the source of the Nile is a nervous person’s nightmare, as they are constantly suffering fevers, or attacked by animals or people. We tend to think of Darwin as an old man with a long white beard, wrapped up warm in his house in Kent, but as Janet Browne says in her wonderful biography², as a young man he loved the outdoor life and the adventures of riding, hunting, exploring. The voyage of the Beagle was for Darwin, and all his comrades, an extraordinarily exciting and risky venture. It is probably fair to say that many people, usually young, seek out risks.

Seeking risks, or being prepared to take extraordinary risks for the sake of new knowledge, is increasingly at odds with modern institutional attitudes. Part of that is driven by a natural concern for the well-being of people in their care, partly by the normalisation of the relatively low level of risk in British society today (all risks are relative to some sort of baseline. If you live constantly in an environment of a very pleasant 22° C, then a drop of 10 degrees is a major risk to one’s wellbeing; if you live in a war-zone then that would not even register). And part of it comes from the strong instinct for institutions to protect their reputation (and reduce their, or the insurance company’s, own risks, usually financial).

Risk avoidance is certainly a good thing (ask any parent), but sometimes risks are not just faced and tolerated, sometimes they are embraced and welcomed. One of the early pioneers of psychology, Henry Head, had the radial and external cutaneous nerves in his arm severed, so that he and his colleague W.H.R. Rivers could investigate nerve recovery³ (I will not mention their other experiments as they will have male readers anxiously crossing their legs). The great biologist J.B.S. Haldane spent some of the first world war standing behind walls while his father blew them up, testing the efficacy – or not – of the protection they gave. Risk-averse and risk-prone behaviours are both natural human behaviours. Time, places, contexts, personality, social norms, economics will shape and favour each, but they probably cannot happily co-exist.

The clash of perspectives is unavoidable, and unresolvable. For the most part the two do not meet, but through a strange compression of two periods of time separated by nearly two hundred years, a 22 year-old Charles Darwin was interviewed about his risk assessment form and pro-

posal before going on the HMS Beagle. A record of it has slipped through a wormhole for us to witness....

* * *

Ah, come in, sit down.... Charles is it, or do you prefer Charlie?

Charles, please.

Thank you for coming to meet us. We called you in as we have been reading your very interesting – indeed challenging – proposal, and especially the risk assessment that goes with it. We do have a few questions.

Of course.

Now, if we understand this correctly, you propose to go round the world and carry out researches into natural history. You’ll be working for a Captain Fitzroy.

Yes, that’s right.

How did you come to get this position. Was it advertised?

Er, no, Professor Henslow suggested to Captain Fitzroy that I would be a good person, being a naturalist and a gentleman.

I see. So there was no advertisement, no interviews, no other candidates... a bit old fashioned, don’t you think? A problem for Human Resources, I suppose. Let’s get started.

Now, we take mental health very seriously, and our first task is to make sure that this is not a trip that will endanger your mental health. We understand this is the second voyage of the HMS Beagle. Does that provide us with the assurance we need that mental health will not be an issue?

Er, I believe the captain, Pringle Stokes, committed suicide during the first voyage.

Not a very good start, Charlie, is it? We had better put that down as a No. Now, let’s move on to transport and accommodation. We understand the ‘project vehicle’ is the HMS Beagle, a Cherokee class brig – an unfortunate name in this day and age. How many people will be on it?

Sixty-five sailors and 10 supernumeraries like myself.

I see. ...And how many rooms?

Well. There’s a cabin I will share with Captain Fitzroy, the other officers share, and most of the rest are in a single room, I think.

I believe the boat is only 27 metres long. That’s a lot of people in such a small space. Not very hygienic.

Ship

Ship?

It's a ship not a boat.

Boats, ships... For the purposes of risk assessments all water-borne craft are considered to be boats. We have to keep it simple for the database. Now, we understand that boat journeys can be quite rough. Do you have any relevant experience of sailing?

No.

I think, then, that you should probably take a course before travelling. I do hope you don't get sea-sick..⁴

You have left blank anything about other modes of transport. We assume you will travel on land, so we need more details here – owners' names, vehicle details

I think they'll be mules, horses, perhaps donkeys. I don't know their names, I'm afraid.

Very well. Please supply these as soon as you have them.

Let's turn to your study area. From your previous answers, I'll take it as read that you do not have any relevant experience, but you have listed the study area as Cape Verde Islands, Bahia, Rio de Janeiro and surrounding areas, Montevideo and surrounding area, the Falkland Islands, Tierra del Fuego, large parts of Chile and Peru, the Galapagos Islands – never heard of them – New Zealand, bits of Australia (undefined), and Cape Town in South Africa. This seems to be very ambitious for someone so inexperienced. I'm afraid we will need detailed plans and maps for all these areas.

But they're unexplored by scientists – that's why we're going there.

I understand that, but that makes it all very high risk, and generally we prefer early career researchers to work in areas for which we already have substantial knowledge. What exactly do you plan to do – 'naturalising' and 'geologising' were not very helpful responses.

I'm going to look at all the geology, sort of see whether the land has risen and fallen, or the sea. I'm going to study volcanoes, and do the stratigraphy of all the places we visit. As Captain Fitzroy will be doing depth surveys for the Admiralty, I shall sample the animals in the sea as we travel. On land I want to go and look for fossils, as well as collect samples of plants and animals for me to study later. All that diversity will be useful in some way. I'm not certain what to do in the Galapagos Islands, but I'm sure something will come to me.

So, geology, marine biology, palaeontology and zoology. A bit broad, don't you think? A bit ambitious. We need more details about methods and so on, so that we can assess any health and safety concerns we might have. What happens, for example, if while you're looking for animals you get bitten by some poisonous bug, and get Chagas disease for example?⁵

I don't know.

And other dangers – suppose a volcano erupts – do you have an exit strategy?

*I'm sure that won't happen.*⁶

And aren't there earthquakes where there are volcanoes?

*Sometimes, but it's rare.*⁷

Now, let's turn to accommodation on land. You don't seem to have provided, as required by the forms, the lists and plans of all accommodation during the project, remembering that AirBnB is strongly discouraged.

Well, I don't really know where I'll be staying, and for how long. It all depends on what we find, what Captain Fitzroy wants to do, what is happening in the area.

I think, Charlie, that you'll find a Gantt chart helpful for you to plan your time more effectively, and will allow you to fill in all the contact details and locations that we will need. Now, we need to get you to set check-in times. You'll have to check in with designated personnel at fixed points, so that we know you're safe.

That'll be very difficult – sort of depends on how the wind blows. Whenever I can, I'll send letters with passing boats returning to England, or leave them with people in the towns we visit, and someone will pick them up and pass them on, I'm sure.

That really does look very haphazard and unreliable.

I see you have put 'may be expected to take part in military operations' in response to questions about special hazards.

*Yes, South America is a pretty volatile area, I understand, but I'm sure it will be exciting to walk with Pistols & Cutlass through the streets of a Town.*⁸

Hmm, not sure that is quite the answer we were looking for. Well, I'm afraid we have run out of time. We would have liked to talk more, especially about research permits, local collaboration, and this strange matter of someone called Jeremy Button, but I don't think that is likely to change our views. Ultimately, of course, it's up to the University's insurers.

By the way, we consider 'about five years' to really be too long and too vague for your answer to 'duration of the project'. We'll provide you with feedback so that you can revise your forms.

How long will that take? The tide is turning, the ship – er, boat – must leave.

Five working days is the minimum, but I think there's a bank holiday next week. The boat can, of course, leave as that is for the Navy to decide, but you will probably not have our responses in time. We are sure you are disappointed, but it is not just a matter of H&S – we also understand from the Research Committee that you do not have any hypotheses in your proposal – and it is its experience that most hypothesis-free research carried out by very early career researchers such as yourself is unlikely to have a major impact on the progress of science...

there will be other training opportunities for you closer to home. Have you taken the CV development course?

No.

Well. I suggest you go back to your room, book yourself on a few courses, and try and come up with a hypothesis and project that is a bit more feasible – remember that there is a whole section on feasibility in the on-vellum application form, and just putting ‘That’s up to Captain Fitzroy’ is not much of an answer. And do rethink your impact statement – changing the way we look at life is really a little grandiose, and ‘light will be thrown on man and his history’ is just a ridiculous thing to write, don’t you think?

Thank you. I think I’ll go and collect a few beetles from the Fens instead.

1. Raby (2001) *Alfred Russel Wallace: a Life*. Princeton.
2. Browne, Janet (1996) *Charles Darwin: Voyaging*. Pimlico
3. Slobodkin, R. (1997). *W.H.R. Rivers: Pioneer Anthropologist, Psychiatrist of the Ghost Road*. Sutton
4. He did.
5. H & S may have been right on this one. It has been suggested that Chagas disease was responsible for many of Darwin’s subsequent health problems.
6. Darwin witnessed the eruption of the Osorno volcano in the Andes while in Chile.
7. Darwin experienced the earthquake that Valdivia in Chile; the earthquake destroyed the town of Concepción.
8. Darwin took part in a mission with 50 armed men to retake a mutinous garrison; he experienced a number of other violent political upheavals. He was excited about ‘Pistols and Cutlass’.

How to initiate Congregation actions

How to trigger a debate or discussion in Congregation

It is open to any 20 or more members of Congregation to propose a resolution or topic for discussion at a meeting of Congregation; requests must be made in writing to the Registrar not later than noon on the 22nd day before the relevant meeting. Any 2 or more members of Congregation can submit an amendment to, or announce an intention to vote against, a resolution or a legislative proposal (*i.e.* a proposal to amend the statutes). Notice must be given to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 8th day before the meeting.

Questions and replies

Any 2 or more members of Congregation may ask a question in Congregation about any matter concerning the policy or the administration of the University. Requests must be submitted to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 18th day before the Congregation meeting at which it is to be asked. The question and the reply (drafted by Council) will be published in *Gazette* in the week prior to the relevant meeting. The answer is also formally read out at the meeting. Supplementary questions are allowed.

Postal votes

Attendance at meetings of Congregation tends to be low. Postal voting can potentially allow opinion to be easily accessed more widely across Congregation membership. Congregation can trigger a postal vote after a debate (but not after a discussion or a question and reply where no vote is taken). 25 or more members of Congregation have to be present (“on the floor”) at the relevant debate. The request must be made by 4pm on the 6th day after the debate, signed by 50 members of Congregation, in writing to the Registrar. Council can also decide to hold a postal ballot, by the same deadline.

Flysheets

To generate a flysheet for publication with the *Gazette*, the camera-ready copy (2 sides maximum) should be submitted with at least 10 signatures on an indemnity form (obtainable from the Registrar) by 10am on the Monday in the week in which publication is desired.

Regulations governing the conduct of business in Congregation can be found at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/529-122.shtml>
Items placed on the agenda for Congregation are published in the *Gazette*.
The Congregation website is at: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/governance/congregation.
Advice on Congregation procedures is available from the Council Secretariat on request (email: congregation.meeting@admin.ox.ac.uk).

Cambridge Supervisions: call for review

G.R.EVANS

A campaign group, 'Justice for College Supervisors' (J4CS),¹ has threatened a boycott of undergraduate supervisions in Cambridge this Term. It has been called off in response to a proposal agreed by the Bursars' Business Committee on 23 September. Following the intercollegiate procedural requirements it would have taken too long to get as far as approval of the proposal before undergraduate teaching began, but J4CS was able to approve it for its part by 4 October. The proposal includes an 'uplift' to the intercollegiate rates for supervisions for this academic year to between 8.2% and 9.6%, depending on the number of students in the supervision. J4CS also calls for prompt payment for supervisions, but still more fundamental matters remain to be tackled.

Cambridge, like Oxford, offers its undergraduate students regular individual teaching through the colleges, with the advantage that this ensures that the student has actually written the essay and provides a robust defence against unmonitored resort to AI. This is something no other university can aspire to and it is seen as one of the reasons Oxford and Cambridge stand so high in all league tables. Colleges take responsibility for the provision, with Oxford's tutorial system having its counterpart in Cambridge's 'supervisions'.

Many of us are able to compare the experience in both universities, as undergraduates and later as deliverers of tutorials and supervisions. The tradition is that these occasions are not for teaching but for discussion. One collects reading an essay to have it taken apart with magisterial remorselessness only to be faced in later years with student performances needing similar treatment. Nevertheless there has perhaps been some drift in the style of the exercise. An expectation that students need support and encouragement has certainly grown stronger and perhaps encourages a gentler approach.

The balance between lectures, where information is given, and tutorials and supervisions where it is examined and challenged may shift with student willingness to go regularly to lectures. Lectures in the sciences tend to meet a need to cover the syllabus systematically, which is not always the case in the humanities. 'Faculty organised supervisions' are more common in the sciences.

Academically, the student 'experience' of this highly valued system of direct personal teaching may vary a good deal with the experience and expertise of those offering it. A Cambridge Director of Studies' choice of supervisor for a paper is usually dictated by the availability of the relevant specialist expertise, but that may mean a range of options in terms of experience.

Those providing tutorials and supervisions may be academic staff employed by the University, with the difference that Cambridge has no conjoint appointments. In recent years Cambridge has been increasing its number of unestablished academic posts but Cambridge's established academics hold University Teaching Offices, whose sole duty under the Statutes is to give a minimum

of thirty lectures a year.² They may be reluctant to give time to supervisions. A University Teaching Officer may be invited by a College to hold a Fellowship, on a basis which may include no particular requirements and cost the College little or nothing, though there is normally an expectation of some supervisions for its students. Some academics hold College Lectureships, commonly involving a stated number of teaching hours through supervisions.

Tutorials and supervisions may also be given by post-docs, often those in research-only fixed-term posts, or by graduate students, and it is these who have raised the concerns prompting the planned boycott this Term. A record of numbers of supervisions given by individuals and payments made is available³ but there is no official list of supervision providers, although one has been promised.⁴ Nevertheless J4CS has confidently sketched some figures, claiming that '90% of undergraduate supervisors are not on payroll – which means that only 10% of a total of around 5000 supervisors are properly contracted for the work they do. Half of supervisions are delivered by graduate students, post-docs, and other freelancers'.⁵ J4CS claims have been variously elaborated: for 'minimum guaranteed teaching hours'; 'a payment timeline'; 'a transparent recruitment process' and 'employment rights, including paid sick leave, as well as parental leave'.⁶

An additional J4CS demand has been that new supervisors should be paid for their mandatory training. This did not sit tidily with conventions in other universities that such training provides a graduate undertaking teaching with a valuable qualification. Oxford offers free 'Preparation for Teaching and Learning at Oxford' (PLTO),⁷ leading to a 'Developing Learning and Teaching (DLT)' qualification.⁸ In Cambridge it had been agreed that from 2023-24, all new supervisors will be awarded an 'initial payment' of £100 for their time attending training, but #J4CS argues that 'this payment does not suitably compensate supervisors for attendance at mandatory faculty- and department-based trainings'. It was also intended that 'the Colleges will compensate supervisors by paying each supervisor an additional £100 when the supervisor has their first supervision report approved' and that 'this 'initial payment' rate will subsequently increase with UCEA pay rises'.

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This campaign had been brewing for a year or two. On 15 April 2021 the Cambridge branch of UCU, in conjunction with the Cambridge Student Union, announced a joint campaign 'calling for a major overhaul in the terms and conditions of college-employed hourly-paid undergraduate supervisors'.⁹ A petition was sent to Senior Tutors.¹⁰ The resulting campaign group, #J4CS, continued to press for change. There was an update from it on 28 February 2022, with coverage in the *Guardian*.¹¹ The 'col-

lege supervision system was described as a ‘scandal’ and it was suggested that University Teaching Officers were also complaining, in their case that they were ‘facing pressure to take on unmanageable loads of teaching on top of their University roles’.¹²

In June 2022 the Bursars Committee agreed to increase the ‘re-charge’ rates paid per supervision hour but noted the variation among colleges in their arrangements for both the procurement of and the payment for supervisions and also the arrangements made between colleges for the appointment of particular supervisors. Levels were set for 2022-3, depending on the number supervised, and ranging from c. £31 to c. £47 an hour.¹³ However, the complainant group of relatively young and inexperienced supervisors had repeatedly claimed that the preparation time needed for an hour’s supervision was ‘at least three hours’, reducing their payment to below the National minimum wage for those over 23.¹⁴ On 30 November 2022 the campaign joined forces with UCU in its own strike action.

A meeting was held between the Office for Intercollegiate Services and J4CS on 30 March 2023 with a statement published on 14 April, reporting that it had been ‘productive’. J4CS had agreed to ‘refrain from attributing intentionality to College/OIS employees in further tweets’. The meeting had covered pay and payment for supervisors and the mandatory training.¹⁵

When the boycott was announced in July 2023,¹⁶ it was promptly covered in *Varsity*, reporting that UCU had ‘organised a £5000 hardship fund for striking supervisors’. The author of the article said he had ‘naively’ suggested that:

‘the aims of a campaign on college teaching should be to return to a system in which almost all small group supervision teaching is performed by governing body college fellows, but was told that PhD students need to teach to support themselves financially and also that they want to build up experience.’

The campaign had told *Varsity* that in its view ‘the University has no intention to meaningfully reform the working conditions of supervisors’ and that it did not ‘realise’ that they ‘could tutor GCSE level for three times the price’ they were ‘paid for a supervision’.¹⁷

On 3 August a statement intended for students was published by J4CS. It claimed that ‘the supervision system operates like a gig economy’ and asked ‘do you want your university teaching to be organised like Deliveroo?’ It told them that ‘around half of your supervisions are taught by casualised staff earning near or less than minimum wage’ and that they were boycotting not only about that but also to get employment contracts with protections such as holiday pay.¹⁸

On 29 August an all-staff circular provided *An update from the University and Colleges on the #Justice4College-Supervisors Campaign* on the boycott. This ‘announced’, J4CS said crossly, ‘with no prior warning’ in July that the Council had discussed the need to address ‘the issue of excessive workloads on both students and staff as a priority’ at its meeting on 20 June. The meeting’s Minute 823 was concerned with student demands for a Reading Week each term but the Council had ‘agreed that the University and the Colleges should collectively seek to address the issue of excessive workloads on both students and staff as a priority’.

To that end, the Council agreed that a paper should be drafted presenting options to reduce student workload (e.g. syllabus review, supervision norms and possible ‘grace’ weeks, as well as the proposal for the reading week pilot). The Council noted that concerns about staff as distinct from student workload would be addressed by Human Resources via the People Strategy, but did not consider the possible implications of making graduate student supervisors into University’s employees. It was agreed that a draft paper would be considered by the Council in Michaelmas Term.¹⁹

In this circular of late August it was noted that:

‘a key concern discussed at length across the intercollegiate bodies are the anecdotal reports from #J4CS members about the preparation time that some supervisors require in order to deliver their supervisions. We have received reports of some PhD students and early career researchers spending well in excess of three hours to prepare for one supervision.’

It was insisted that ‘no supervisor should be spending that much time to prepare for the delivery of one hour of teaching’. If a supervision was above all an opportunity for discussion in interaction with a student who had become sufficiently informed in the writing of an essay to take part, the fact that those needing that much preparation time were supervising undergraduates raised concerns about the operation of the whole system. Perhaps these inexperienced supervisors were treating it as an exercise in the imparting of knowledge rather than helping the student to think about knowledge gained. The Colleges would ‘need to work with the University in making this clearer to those wishing to supervise’. For some courses ‘the resources provided to supervisors by Faculties and Departments need to be clearer on the expected coverage and format of a supervision’. For other courses ‘a major review of the role and format of supervisions might be appropriate’.²⁰

The circular included links to the records of the four meetings²¹ held with the J4CS on 30 March,²² 11 May,²³ and 22 June.²⁴ In May it had been agreed that ‘a joint survey seeking to better understand the landscape of supervisions across the colleges’ would ‘be launched soon’ and that both the Office of Intercollegiate Services²⁵ and the UCU would ‘encourage as many supervisors as possible to take this survey’. The record of the June meeting mentioned that in the afternoon of June 22nd, the Bursars’ Business Committee²⁶ had met to consider the J4CS pay rate proposal. That presented practical difficulties about the number of potential employment contracts which would be needed between supervisors and colleges, with supervisors who teach for more than one College needing ‘to have separate (and likely different) employment contracts’. The intercollegiate re-charge rates were agreed annually, but the University could not as J4CS demanded become ‘the employer for all supervisors and provide all of the workplace protections that permanent employees receive’. J4CS had in any case rejected any suggestion that an employment contract would remove a supervisor’s right to choose whether or not to accept a particular invitation to conduct a given supervision.

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The call for a boycott has had its effect. There is now

an understanding that the concerns listed the J4CS *Programme of Work* will be ‘taken forward’. These include a ‘teaching review’ to ‘investigate the volume of supervision’. (A ‘task and finish’ group to make recommendations on workloads was promised in an *Update on Industrial Action* sent round as an all-staff email on 22 September.)

The *Twenty-Seventh Report of the Board of Scrutiny*²⁷ raised a number of concerns about ‘the University’s employment arrangements’ and referred to the review conducted by Human Resources a year earlier. It noted that Cambridge’s supervisors are not University employees for that purpose. They are paid by the hour directly by the commissioning College. The modes of employment, if this constitutes employment, remains unclear. There has been worldwide discussion of claims that PhD students should become employees,²⁸ and the J4CS *Programme of Work* includes calls for an employment contract. But it is by no means clear, it notes, ‘who a single employer would be’ or what ‘type’ of contract might be appropriate. It wonders about a ‘template contract’.

Furthermore, revision of the *Supervisor Expectations* document²⁹ is called for and also review of guidance for colleges. Needed too is a ‘clearer understanding of work expected from PhD students and early career researchers, the expected amount of time to undertake that work, and avenues to raise concerns’, with ‘template guidance for Directors of Studies, Faculties and Departments, outlining best practice when seeking and commissioning undergraduate supervisors’.

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This, if all carried forward, might lead to significant fresh thinking about the purpose, character and operation of Cambridge’s undergraduate supervisions. It remains to be seen how far it will go and how fast it will take place.

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MIT's Pivot

BILL WHELAN

I went to high school on the outskirts of Boston. MIT was not thought of as some lofty place. It was just 20 miles down the road and approachable. So it was a commonplace of conversation. Several of my classmates applied to it. Our neighbor was a chemical engineer who worked at Polaroid next to dozens of MIT alumni. I heard from him accounts of their deep lodgement in that firm. My father worked as a graphic designer at a scientific establishment where he solicited MIT-inspired input for his exhibitions. So the Institute was very much on my radar for years.

The following personal impressions about the emergence of today's powerhouse that is MIT are garnered from research, but also particularly from encounters with MIT people.

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I start with a chance discovery while rummaging in a basement. The basement being set in the Newport, RI public library, the find being a bound compilation set casually on a bottom shelf. The latter contained a sort of census. It was dated 1925 and listed some 500 Chinese names. Not just that but such details such as the American universities they had attended and the coursework they'd taken, as well as their current occupations in China and their provincial birth places. They hailed from a variety of provinces and pursued a breadth of professions. It was a real eye-opener – here was a tale of two countries intertwined.

These were the Boxer Indemnity Scholars. They came about out of a particular arrangement between the US and China. The suppression of the Boxer Uprising brought punishment. This included massive payments to Western powers. The Chinese induced the American authorities to reallocate the indemnity, funneling \$12 million in 1908 money to scholarships for Chinese to study in the States. The recipients had to undergo a demanding regime in order to get picked. They prepared at Tsing Hua School which was lodged in an imperial garden on Beijing's outskirts. This school later morphed into Tsing Hua University and came to be called the MIT of China.

The intent of the exchange was to fashion a New China. It sought to make something more out of its jostling cities than just sumptuous pavilions and sordid shanties. They wanted to supply them with a fabric which could compare with the West. That meant a focus on infrastructure and industry. So you see many of the exchange scholars, on returning home to China, taking positions with the railroads and tramways, at cotton and silk mills, with salt revenue bureaux, at iron works, and embedded in port and navigation oversight. Certain of them, oriented toward aviation, were central to that industry's development in China – so essential an undertaking when the war with Japan came. Alongside these basic industries returnees resorted to more sedentary professions – editors, architects, professors, accountants, auditors. Then there were some

outliers – one was attached to the China International Famine Relief Committee and another employed by the Peacock Moving Pictures in Shanghai.

These listees had come to the States in the early part of the 20th century to attend suitable universities. Dozens upon dozens of them went to MIT. It was an obvious and much desired destination. For decades they were a presence on the institute's Cambridge campus where they made the most of their time there. They took degrees in sanitary engineering or naval architecture or suchlike. They joined clubs, tried out for athletic teams, sponsored entertainments. And they could always resort to an emerging Chinatown in nearby Boston.

The world off-campus was not always so welcoming. There existed a Chinese Exclusion Act which barred certain elements from that country. Students were exempted from this measure yet sometimes Immigration officials would pester them. Throughout, MIT's faculty and staff appreciated their talents. The institute sought to internationalize during this period making the Indemnity Exchange a prime factor to this movement.

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It is possible to compare MIT to Cornell, Carnegie Mellon and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. All three were mentioned repeatedly in the 1925 census I discovered. Early on Cornell enrolled plenty from overseas, drawing them from Havana and Shanghai and Montreal. It was and also is proficient at engineering and architecture. Carnegie Mellon rivals MIT in computer science these days and previously was transformed by input from the coffers of several industrial fortunes. RPI manages a huge career fair which allows seniors exposure to every sort of industry.

MIT's real peer may well be Caltech. The latter's beginnings were bareboned – just an obscure vocational tech planted just outside of Los Angeles, in Pasadena. It was born aloft by the economic boom of the 1920s. By the end of that decade it was vying with East Coast and European establishments. Much of this was due to a Canadian-born lumberman who passed his massive fortune to it. He'd appear on campus in the 1920s being driven about in a Hispano Suiza sedan by a liveried chauffeur. Such gifts allowed the institute to expand its physical plant and hire an architect of genius who designed a campus indebted to Spanish Renaissance, graced with arcades and fountains. A lush setting for the austere instruction. These donations also enabled it to recruit talent from elsewhere, including MIT.

In 1930 Caltech welcomed the Hungarian *émigré* Theodore von Kármán whose lab became a mecca for the aeronautical sciences. There was the Guggenheim name and money behind this arrangement. Out of it came substantial developments in rocket technology. Also, Caltech's engineering faculty supplied much of the expertise for

the construction of an aqueduct extending from the Colorado River to Los Angeles. So practical applications at Caltech came next to theoretical advances in cosmology and genetics.

The institute's rise mirrored the state's involvements in industries like aviation and sports like horse racing. Caltech facilities and the Santa Anita Park racecourse were not just engines suited to entertainment and instruction. They were signs of a West Coast unawed by the East. Their thoroughbred Seabiscuit would knock off the East's high flying War Admiral in a 1938 much vaunted match race, just as their aeronautical labs showed their primacy over the rest of the country. Santa Anita's grandstand was done in swank Art Deco – and by the same architect who designed Caltech's Athenaeum and the Hoover Dam.

Caltech wasn't the only institute to carry on a sustained relationship with business and industrial concerns. MIT too had its own funding firehose. Its endowment was boosted by repeated infusions from East Coast industrialists like George Eastman of Eastman Kodak and a succession of DuPonts. By the 1920s MIT was housed in a grand limestone palace. Under an extensive roof ran 'long, antiseptic, and fatiguing corridors.' That edifice was built on tidal flats along the Charles River, on soil once lousy with clamshells and tin cans.

The British geneticist, J.B.S. Haldane, writing for *Forum Magazine* ('Nationality and Research,' May, 1926), made the point that 'research flourishes best in an atmosphere where leisure and even laziness are possible.' He went on to ruminate about how conducive conditions were in the States. The country was producing a colossal volume of scientific work, of very unequal merit. Where endowment can assure results, they lead the world...

'Langmuir is provided by the General Electric Company with his own laboratory and a salary which most Cabinet Ministers would envy, on condition that he occasionally spare a day or so to consider the problems which arise in their works. Some of the ablest men in Europe are constantly being attracted over by offers of salaries and still more of facilities for research. In spite of these facts and the undoubted genius of many Americans, I am inclined to think that in pure (though not perhaps in applied) science, America produces less than either Britain or Germany.'

It was in just this period – the 1920s – that CalTech lured first-flight foreign physicists onto its campus. It did this at the insistence of a Nobel Prize winner and with funds culled from private foundations like Rockefeller and Carnegie.

With MIT and Caltech – the push and pull goes on till this day. The latter turns out Ph.D.'s in engineering and the sciences at twice the rate as the former. Caltech is a smaller school without a business or public affairs component. MIT's reputation is abetted by alumni very much out in the public square. Its endowment – the E-Bomb – is five times the size of Caltech's. Each year MIT's undergrads carry off the Putnam Math Competitions. At one time that prime position was Caltech's. One commentator on Quora – a 'lapsed' physicist out of MIT – said that Caltech 'celebrates pure intellect in a way that seems a bit antiquated now, but very charming. MIT is much more embedded in the present. Caltech cultivates a timelessness.'

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MIT and Harvard were never that much alike. They were born into separate eras and were purposed to different ends. MIT's vocational bent allied it more to the original mission of art institutes like Pratt and Rhode Island School of Design (see 'The Vocationals,' *Oxford Magazine* Eighth Week, Hilary Term, 2002) than to the more aloof deportment of the Ivies. The manufacturing factor goes straight back to MIT's beginnings when it sought 'to respect the dignity of useful work.'

There was another difference, this shown in a case coming out of the 1940s. That was when MIT set out to hire a series of Jewish faculty members. Paul Samuelson – subsequently a Clark medalist – was the first of these, hired in 1940 for a tenure-track position and followed closely by other recruits to the economics department such as Walter Rostow and Robert Solow. They turned a mediocre department into a superior one and one garnished with National Science Foundation fellows.

Harvard was not so keen on having Jewish faculty in the 1930s and 40s. This was abetted by a dean who, while an accomplished mathematician, was also bigoted. He turned his back on their aspirations. 'You could be disqualified for a job if you were either smart or Jewish or Keynesian,' Robert Solow said of Harvard's economics department. Samuelson was all of these. As for those who were hired, it could be trying for them. Another Harvard dean, writing years afterwards, said that 'Jewish scholars who managed to become professors frequently became "closet Jews," anxious to dissociate themselves from their background.' Someone like the historian Arthur Schlesinger Sr could thrive there in the 1930s and 40s; but his Prussian Jewish and Austrian Catholic immigrant ancestry was partly obscured by his parents' conversion to Protestantism and his own assimilated upbringing in the Midwest. Schlesinger – an ardent New Dealer – was not taken with haughty Boston Brahmins. To him, Ohio-born was as good as Beacon Hill-bred.

Harvard College also sought to reduce its Jewish enrollment in the late 1920s. Meanwhile, their numbers at MIT swelled. Enough to allow for a Menorah Society to thrive there. They oftentimes came from ordinary circumstances. Many clustered in the scrap iron trade because it could be carried out on a shoestring, the same way as Chinese immigrants wound up, amid the sweat and the starch, running a lot of laundromats: 'A bar of soap and a scrub board, they were in business.' Both cases point to a people with a pragmatic, resilient streak: they made the most of what little they had.

A Boston-bred gentile remarked about this period: 'Every Jewish junk-dealer from Chelsea, every shop-keeper or delicatessen proprietor in Dorchester, every tailor or fur-worker in Mattapan, above all else wanted his son to become a professional man.'

Any and all sacrifice was made to this end. Not at all like the *émigré* German Jewish scholars a lot of whom, belonging to the *haute bourgeoisie*, were schooled at severe gymnasiums and moved in worldly circles.

Quotas existed elsewhere in American society at this time. That included industry and finance as well as the professions. There were, for instance, few Jews among the great commercial houses on Wall Street – though some in the investment firms. Likewise, an absence of them at the upper reaches of the insurance business. Within medicine, Jews had some difficulty obtaining internships and residencies among the house staff at hospitals.

Robert Weatherall (1932-2015) came out of the coil of English insidery; Eton (where he was a house prefect) and King's College, Cambridge (where he won a minor scholarship). His father taught science at the former while the son took history at the latter. But there was more to the family than this. Weatherall's mother – née Isakovics and whom he doted on – was from Bohemia, a translator who made their home in Windsor during World War Two a welcome spot for Czech refugees. Lots of animated conversations which carried on into the evening.

Weatherall might have stayed at Cambridge where he was at ease and where he initially took a position in the University's Registry. But a spell as a teenager at a summer camp along the Hudson River lured him back to the States about a decade later. He wrote to MIT and offered them his services as someone 'still unmarried and unfettered by a family.' This provoked interest from MIT which thereupon reached out to his references several of whom moved within the orbit of King's College. One said Weatherall was 'a generous and stalwart supporter of "liberal" causes (I use the word in its widest and best and in its most "English" sense).'

Weatherall was hired by MIT where, acclimatized and marrying an American, he stayed and progressed through a series of jobs in admissions and then career services. He was known for his civility on and off campus. Also for his penchant for fresh thinking. He urged engineers not to allow themselves to be boxed into a purely technical discipline. Weatherall said that customarily they had had two career paths – one technical and the other managerial. The first meant a lower career ceiling.

His role as career services office entailed dealing with a job market cyclical in nature. One year – 1971 – Weatherall was worried about the decline in corporate recruiting on campus. This, he said, was due to the downturn in defense and aerospace spending. So seniors turned to graduate schools. About ten years later things had changed. Now MIT had some 500 companies setting up recruitment stalls on campus. Weatherall said that engineers 'are not like other professionals. For them there are no Morgans, no old-line prestige institutions.' He was referring to how so many Ivy seniors sought job interviews with Wall Street investment houses.

Weatherall remarked on MIT seniors' full-throated attraction to Bell Labs, the research branch of the AT&T company. It was said to be the equal of the best academic laboratories, so it drew more MIT students than any other firms during this period. Hewlett-Packard also did well on their campus visits. MIT used a lot of their equipment in their labs. As Weatherall remarked: 'If the professors think enough of its use, then the students will think enough about going there.' H-P was also known for fostering creative engineering without suffering office politicking. The company sent engineers to do interviews. These engineers, so the *New York Times* reported, made impromptu visits to the students' rooms and tried out spot quizzes. 'They grilled me on highly technical questions, you know, like the impediments of certain amps – stuff I should have known,' said one senior. 'I got about half of them right.'

Other firms did not fare so well. Boeing showed up with just personnel people only, no engineers. 'I'm still angry

at Boeing,' said a computer scientist. 'They brought two older personnel guys who simply didn't take me seriously. They kept telling me Seattle was a nice place to live. I would ask a question about the technology of the 757, and they told me again how nice it was in Seattle.'

In 1988 in an interview with a business journal Weatherall revealed employment trends going back generations. At one time engineers came with farm-bred know-how. Many MIT freshmen grew up in small towns, coming up from rural backgrounds. They were used to working on farm machinery. They weren't raised around money. Some were so short of funds they'd spend an extra year out of high school working locally to save up for tuition. They wound up employed by massive Midwestern companies like the auto and steel-makers. But by now the family farms were gone.

Back in 1969, he'd make Bethlehem Steel a mainstay call. Two decades later that firm was unlikely to entertain him. Instead the high-tech companies were recruiting at MIT. This was in line with the shift in the economy from an industrial basis to service oriented. Many of the institute's intake were now coming from the cities; they had different expectations. They sought the sophistication of the commercial, high-tech outfits. At that point MIT's freshmen class was about one fifth Asian-American. And they were not the only city-bred minority represented. MIT readily recruited from specialized high schools like NYC's Bronx School of Science and Brooklyn Tech.

In 1988 the US Congress held hearings about recruitment to government agencies. Weatherall appeared at one of these and reported on the general unresponsiveness his graduates had to such employment. Neither the pay nor the conditions proved enticing. Someone pointed out that 'Prospective recruits react poorly to grey metal desks and computer equipment three-generations behind the personal computers they use at home.' I myself was embedded in the bureaucracy of the time and can attest to these down-at-heel circumstances.

Industry was claiming the vast majority of MIT's people at this point. Weatherall noted the stream of MIT alumni headed to Silicon Valley. He encouraged the entrepreneurial spirit among them. A periodical pointed to a free wheeling California 'culture which glorified risk-taking and attributed little shame to failure. Try out your idea – see if it works. If it doesn't come on back. Skilled workers after work went to 'geek watering holes' shared by all sorts of competing firms as well as the guy in the next cubicle (who might easily be the boss). Employees had affairs and worked all kinds of hours for days at a time. They coined the expression "24/7".' (*Journal of Applied Research in Economic Development*, May, 2013)

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During the 1950s and 60s MIT's admissions system was stirred by certain developments. Several tests were generated in the States during this period such as the National Merit Exam and the Advanced Placement. These aimed to ferret out high schoolers with the potential to take on the demanding coursework to be found at top tier universities. The country was also gearing itself for a drawn out Cold War, so saw these exams as a way to jumpstart able candidates for this engagement. Within a short time of the installment of the AP test, applicants to

MIT binged on them, with several hundred of the test-takers heading to the freshman Class of 1960.

There was also a change in MIT's regional recruitment. During the 1930s, some two thirds of MIT's intake came from New England. That included many day commuters. Over the succeeding decades it sought to convert to a national representation. It broadened its base by making visits to schools in the South and West. These were done by admissions staff and faculty. In the early 1960s they made several painstaking sweeps through Florida. The names of the schools retained a picturesque aspect to them – Palmetto and Coral Gables and the like. Another school visited was named Attucks and had an all Black enrollment, for this was a South still segregated. These visits yielded some serious interest in MIT according to confidential critiques. Enrollment from the South Atlantic states bumped up. Things were changing. MIT was extending its reach. And the advent of air travel meant no more 1,200 mile slog up the Atlantic Coast by train.

Then there was MIT's largesse. Take the MacVicar Fellows. These go to four MIT professors each year who revivify undergraduate instruction. Each fellow receives \$10,000 per year, over ten years, for research and travel. They were named for a dean who was born in Canada and so – like so many others who enlivened MIT's presence around this time – of immigrant stock. Margaret MacVicar maintained that it 'is not technicians that we seek to prepare, nor bench-tied engineers practicing narrow specialties and intent on deadlines and objectives devised elsewhere.' MIT's people owed society a wider calling.

One recipient, David Autor, is a labor economist who delves into the intersection of geography and job opportunities:

'In the initial decades following WWII, U.S. cities offered a distinctive skills and earnings escalator to less-educated workers. A likely reason why is that, in these decades, adults without college degrees performed higher-skilled, more specialized jobs in cities than their non-urban counterparts...'

Laboring in urban factories and offices, they staffed middle-skill, middle-pay production, clerical, and administrative roles, where they worked in close collaboration with highly educated professionals (e.g., engineers, executives, attorneys, actuaries, etc.). These collaborative working relationships often demanded specific skills and shared expertise, and likely contributed to the higher wages (and higher productivity) of urban non-college workers...

Urban labor markets accordingly provided an escalator of opportunity and upward mobility for immigrants, minorities, less affluent, and less-educated workers. In the decades since 1980, however, this distinctive feature of urban labor markets has diminished. As rising automation and international trade have encroached on employment in urban production, administrative support, and clerical work, the non-college urban occupational skill gradient has diminished and ultimately disappeared. While urban residents are on average substantially more educated — and their jobs vastly more skill-intensive — than four decades ago, non-college workers in U.S. cities perform substantially less specialized... work than they did decades earlier.' ('The Faltering Escalator of Urban Opportunity,' a chapter in the book *Securing Our Economic Future*, 2020)

These words come at a juncture where individual states are delisting a college degree as a requirement for many of their office jobs. This makes for more mobile advancement. So Autor's insights could not be more timely. Meanwhile, he calls his undergrads 'brutally hard working' while they in turn single him out as a shrewd and resourceful mentor.

* * *

I worked as an Immigration inspector at Kennedy Airport in the late 1970s and early 1980s. We processed few immigrant visas from Bangladesh during that period, though we saw a substantial stream from India. Now the former have become a factor in NYC and more specifically in certain occupations and neighborhoods. Their children show up at scholastic swotting shops run by a well-credentialed Bangladeshi-American. Khan Tutorial supplies them with an intense preparation in writing skills and math proficiency, all done to orient them to the looming Advanced Placement and SAT exams. That is how – at the age of twelve or so – they spend their weekends. No idle hours.

They then also proceed to MIT in numbers enough to have their own association. It hosts forums and raises funds for the relief of cyclone victims driven away from their settlements aside a churning Bay of Bengal. It also offers a list of their alumni whose lines of work run from vehicle engineer at General Motors to software specialist at Google Brain. Some wind up with fellowships at Soros or National Science Foundation – very much *de haute volée* – where they are joined by, yes, scads of Caltech grads. So here is MIT at it again, providing access to the offspring of immigrants, whether from the homes of cab drivers and construction scaffolders or else managers and professionals. A MIT dean, writing in 2002, said that each year she 'set aside large blocks of time before commencement so I could practice pronouncing the names of the graduates, often using phonetic spellings or recorded voicemails left by the students so I could get them more or less right.'

MIT continues to be far reaching in its influence. It is neither stale nor insular. MIT embraced industry early on and later nurtured umpteen tech start-ups and spin-offs out of its potent labs and departments. MIT's reputation lent entrepreneurs legitimacy while they in turn passed it equity stakes. So it did not and does not shy from commercialization. This so at odds with the story Corelli Barnett tells in his book *Audit of War*. Britain's neglect of this interchange – and 'interchange' is the exact word, for ideas and funds flowed both ways – was detailed over a century ago; and referred to by Barnett quoting the book *The Universities in the Nineteenth Century*, 1975:

'It is not only that Oxford keeps aloof from technical education, but she keeps aloof from the very much greater thing of which this movement is only a symptom, namely the phenomenon that trade and manufacture are no longer left to themselves as they used to be; they are being organized on scientific lines in all countries. She has always ostentatiously held herself aloof from manufacture and commerce.'

Today, MIT maintains an expansive office of technology licensing – overseen by a Scots native with a talent for persuasion – which manages the transfer of technology

to the marketplace. This entails IPR protection but it also includes new venture creation and incubation. There are some fifty incubators close to the MIT campus. They offer lab space, mentors, funding and networking. Nearby Kendall Square, once the site of desolate parking lots and bleak industrial buildings, is now the *point d'appui* for biotech exemplars. An old Lever Brothers soap plant, for instance, got revamped for new applications. MIT applied some of its endowment to this rejuvenation – an unusual move to make at this time – and it attracted all kinds of talent. That included several future winners of the Turing Awards.

‘MIT [is] so innovative... because of informal groups, unstructured encounters, odd connections, wandering, and daydreaming.’ (*Retooling: A Historian Confronts Technological Change*, by Rosalind Williams, 2002). MIT is also agile in its admissions process. It’d better be. Volumes of valedictorians and SAT aces surge into its applicant pool each year. The acceptance rate is less than 5%. Its intake does not tilt toward a wealthy element or to legacy applicants. One of the current counselor staff

is akin to Robert Weatherall – in other words another uitlander hiree making the most of his office through intuition. Chris Peterson devised an inventive admissions video by recruiting internally from the institute, even engaging its symphony orchestra to the production. It managed to show off MIT’s idiosyncratic appeal and proved popular with many prospective applicants.

Peterson tells us how he came to the job:

‘While MIT attracts people from all over the world, I’m a fairly local guy: I was born a few towns north of Cambridge, and for a good while had the accent to prove it (now it mostly comes out during Bruins games). But I’d never been to MIT, or even known anyone to attend here, before I showed up for my interview to be an admissions counselor for web communications. I was a senior in college. I’d applied to 63 jobs and only MIT had called me back. I got lost, first parking, then along the Infinite [a hallway which serves as a central spine to several buildings and which acted as the inspiration for the blackboard scenes from the film Good Will Hunting]. But Matt decided to hire me anyway. And MIT has been my home ever since.’ (MIT Admissions blog).

Sitting outside the Lamb and Flag

The sky was dark all day, but at the close
A wound of gold had opened in the west –
The old rain glittered on the roof-crest.
And I have seen bleached bones beneath the moon
Where Scáthach’s skilful fury spilt her foes,
And Cadmus lulling Typhoeus with a tune
In the ankle of a wood, while beat above
Zeus in secrecy, to pilfer lightning’s scourge.
I have known mountains bow like serfs to men
And seen the salt-mill left beneath the surge
When Louhi ripped it from Väinämöinen –
But all is air and ashes without love.

Final image

I see you now and always near at hand
In a white dress I loved to watch you in,
Proud, contrary, unsure, a laugh
Hovering in your eyes, and then a glance
As if to say, on my behalf,
See this great jest that I have planned
Or, this is a lucky circumstance
Bevil isn’t it? The pub would show
The low light dancing on your skin
And silently I’d rejoice. And though
I know I must forget you – how can I
Let that image die?

BEVIL LUCK

Bevil Luck was born and grew up in the Fowey Valley in Cornwall. He read English at Merton College before completing his doctorate on the poetry of F.T. Prince in 2019 at the University of Southampton. He now lives and works in Oxford. His verse-translation of the twelfth century song “*Leu chansonet’ e vil*” by Giraut de Bornelh was published in *Delos* in autumn 2018, and he has poems featured in a number of magazines and anthologies.

Notes from the Coal Face

Sir – Robert Foley (“Notes from Ivory Flats”, *Oxford Magazine*, No 453, 17-18, *The great university subsidy scandal*) gives a wonderful snapshot of the subsidy scandal – or how a university manages to look after the pennies that gives its ledger the pounds. The writer’s subject *du jour* touches upon my professional career. I will not claim to be able to write as eloquently as they; my days are filled with spreadsheets, grants, and orders. But, I know my topic; and the situation here in Oxford. I write in a personal capacity.

I would like to first elaborate on the ‘them and us’; or management and academic staff. It seems that the common problem of ‘them and us’ has come around and affected the writer. This simplistic (though apt) dichotomy should in effect be a trichotomy. Management versus academic staff *and* professional staff. And *Oh My!* – do the professional staff know how to mitigate multiple issues highlighted in *Notes*. Always have a professional staff member on your side – we know the University’s policies inside and out in our little fiefdoms.

My advice to any academic or student in the University – make a friend within the professional services teams. Open your doors to us, invite us to lectures, knock on our doors if in person, or drop us a message if virtual. As many of the academic staff do, treat the professional staff with cordiality, and we will be your eyes and ears within a department, and we know where the proverbial bodies lie – or how to work with the system to get a solution.

With this out of the way, let me impart a *little* wisdom and informal advice. For those working on Grants (also known as Projects), always write into the application amounts for business entertainment (“networking”), conference travel, IT equipment – anything that will be used for your work. For those lucky enough to hold money in the General Ledger, if the need is there to further promote the research or teaching of the University, then the spend is *generally* going to be valid.

Take these two examples taken from *Notes*. The first, the lubricated business entertainment (or networking) after a seminar; the second the sandy¹ world of fieldwork. If anyone wants to look further into these for more guidance, this can be found on the Uni-

versity’s Finance Division webpage under Expenditure and Purchasing.²

One has to be very careful with business entertainment – “networking”. Taking a guest speaker out for a thank you drink in lieu of providing an honorarium is perfectly acceptable, as is facilitating a networking event for your students and said speaker, assuming that you hold the funds in your pockets to pay for the drinks and reclaim it promptly via the sparkling new

SAP Concur system. If you don’t, then build into your budget each year for the course or project the expectation for such events. Don’t worry, the professional staff will tell you if you have overstepped the mark.

Similarly, fieldwork. Ask your department for a prepaid credit card or a travel advance. Although this requires a significant amount of receipt hoarding (everything must be accounted for) these facilities are available for you to use.

Yes, I agree – the systems and hoops to jump through are scary. They seem to constantly evolve. But the world moves, systems and regulations evolve, and the professional services are here to support academic staff. For the majority of us, it is on pitifully small wages squeezed like yourselves by the cost of housing, utilities, travel, food, childcare, along with the usual hostility that is sometimes shown towards us due to the byzantine system that epitomises university life. But we are in the same boat, and together we are strong.

A common mantra within the professional services is that no one should be out of pocket working for the University. The issue of overwork is another matter.

Yours sincerely,

TIM EDEN

Senior Finance Officer at the
Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences

1. My degrees are in Egyptology, but please do feel free to insert your own adjective.

2. www.finance.web.ox.ac.uk/expenditure-and-purchasing-landing-page

REVIEWS

Metrics, Indicators and Tables

Metrics That Matter – Counting what’s really important for college students. Zachary Bleemer et al, 2023, Johns Hopkins UP



Here we have ‘a critical look’ at the metrics and performance indicators that have become over the past twenty years so pervasive within the HE industry. The authors ‘explain the ways each of these metrics is flawed’ and sometimes ‘fundamentally misleading’ – ‘The best-known metrics range from inadequate to misleading’.

They assert that ‘students’ reliance on certain metrics have skewed universities’ incentives away from high-quality education and distorted students’ and the broader public’s perceptions of the end goal of higher education, overemphasizing private financial returns over its broad economic and social benefits.

We are taken through the methodological problems with:

- The fashionable ‘Return on Investment’ which totally ‘excludes the non-financial benefits of earning a degree’.
- The ‘University Rankings’ – asking ‘Is going to a higher-ranked university more likely to lead you to a college degree and a higher-paying job?’. Not when there is only a small difference in the positions within a table, and noting that anyway the institutions put much effort into ‘Gaming the Rankings’ (they cheat!). The answer is to replace them with ‘a more simple measure of quality: graduation rates’.
- The metric of ‘Selectivity’ which merely ‘measures the share of applicants to a college that the college rejects’ (aka ‘an admissions rate’). So, management cheats by seeking to hike the number of applicants which it can then reject while zooming up the table!
- The use of ‘Tuition Sticker Price’ which inflates the perceived cost of HE by not properly taking into account ‘the prices that most students actually pay to go to college’. The HE sector earns a reputation for being less affordable than it really is and loses public support.
- And then there is ‘Scorekeeping Student Debt’ which can scare certain potential applicants away from HE.

- A problem made worse by purporting to show ‘Average Wages by College Major’ (what we would see as degree subject choice): ‘low-quality information’ distorts decisions about ‘important’ subject/major choices (and, notoriously, scare the customers away from Humanities degrees).

Thus, the authors conclude: this ‘cacophony of metrics’ amounts to vast oversimplification and the student/family needs to avoid being ‘seduced by their simplicity’; the metrics game is also subject to ‘marketing by powerful interests’; they drive the corporatisation, commodification, and consumerisation of the modern mass university. And the collection of data (and often its cynical manipulation to get the wanted outcome) is bureaucratically costly. But, if at Oxford we are yet again ‘No.1 World-Class Uni’ and safely ahead of Cambridge, presumably we have no quibble with the rankings industry.

DAVID PALFREYMAN

Spots of joy

Colour Revolution: Victorian Art, Fashion & Design. The Ashmolean Museum. Until 18 February 2024. Curated by Matthew Winterbottom, Charlotte Ribeyrol and Madeline Hewitson



We all have broad impressionist images of the different centuries. For Virginia Woolf in *Orlando*, ‘light penetrated to the bedrooms where children were born was naturally of an obfusc green, and what light penetrated to the drawing-rooms where grown men and women lived came through curtains of brown and purple plush.’ It’s all so dark that ‘a poor black cat had been mistaken for coals shovelled on the fire.’ Orlando has ‘to buy twenty yards of more of black bombazine... to make a skirt.’

Men’s clothes in the eighteenth century, and even in the Regency period, had been brightly coloured, but they suddenly became uniform black. When Prince Albert died the Queen took up dominant mourning black. Colour photography was not available until later when our Angelina Acland (1849-1930) used the complicated Sanger Shepherd process, so the blackness of the century is just emphasised. She lived, before moving to Park Town, in a house in Broad Street, demolished to make way for the ugly New Bodleian. Millais’s portrait of

Ruskin at Glenfinlas hung in her study, and that was doubtless an inspiration.



Broad Street in 1892. Angelina Acland’s house is second from the right.



Left: John Ruskin and Henry Acland at Brantwood on 1 August 1893. Photograph by Angelina Acland. Right: Angelina Acland’s study in Oxford, with Millais’s portrait of Ruskin at Glenfinlas above the desk.

Here are photographs of circa 1900 of New College Gardens and a Della Robbia statue given to her by Ruskin in 1878.



Angelina Acland. New College Garden, and a Della Robbia statue at her house in Broad Street (circa 1900).

This impression of the nineteenth century is strong, but to a large extent it is a false impression, and a moment or two’s thought corrects it. We don’t need an exhibition to inform us that colour was available in the nineteenth century, more than available: ubiquitous; but this one in the Ashmolean helps. Commercial and consumerist pres-

asures encouraged the splashing out, but in addition there was a large theoretical and critical discussion, convenient for historians to latch onto now. The Victorians were great pillagers of the past, so that examples from previous centuries were recycled, and this phenomenon forms a large part of the exhibition, which comes with a superb catalogue (£25) containing twenty-one scholarly essays.

In the exhibition and the dense accompanying book there is a colossal amount to catch hold of. It goes off in all sorts of alarming directions – the archaeology of the past, the scientific development of dyes, the encounters with the Orient, the appropriations made possible by colonialism. One has difficulty pulling them all together. One is left with the impression that for the Victorian English person with a reasonable income there was a good deal to consume and enjoy. And the omni-presence of colour even filtered down to those less privileged.

Colour Revolution is extremely ambitious, and casts its net very wide. It looks at the way in which colour was a central and valued feature in art and fashion. Of course colour always was a feature in culture through the ages, but there were certain angles special to the Victorians. In some quarters there was a Puritan resistance to colour, but it was overcome – notably by Ruskin, whose strict Evangelical background might have predisposed him to be suspicious of Titian, Veronese and Turner, say, but he recognised that it was an essential element in God's creation. There was a dramatic development in the 1850s when new colours were put on the market: aniline dyes extracted from coal tar. They were extremely garish, but were quickly taken up by the fashion industry. *Punch*, always on the look-out for anything modish, ridiculed 'the mauve measles':

'Dr. Punch is of opinion that it is not so much a mania as a species of measles. The main reasons which inclines Dr. Punch to this opinion is that one of the first symptoms by which the malady declares itself consists in the eruption of a measly rash of ribbons, about the head and neck of the person who has caught it.' (20 August 1859)

The key Ruskin passage on the new dyes is in *The Queen of the Air* (1865), possibly the most exciting prose work in the whole of Victorian literature:

'So that the word is really a liquid prism, and stream of opal. And then, last of all, to keep the whole history of it in the fantastic course of a dream, warped here and there into wild grotesque, we moderns, who have preferred to rule over coal-mines instead of the sea (and so have turned the everlasting lamp of Athena into a Davy's safety-lamp in the hand of Britannia, and Athenian heavenly lightning into British subterranean 'damp'), have actually got our purple out of coal instead of the sea! And thus, grotesquely, we have had enforced on us the doubt that held the old

word between blackness and fire, and have completed the shadow, and the fear of it, by giving it a name from battle, 'Magenta'.'

Ruskin was caustic about the fact that the dyes were extracted from coal, writing: 'It is a great age this of ours, for traction and extraction if it only knew what to extract from itself, or where to drag itself to.' The new dyes were not universally accepted, and William Morris famously espoused vegetable dyes.

Literary figures shared in the enthusiastic love of colour. A classic moment is D.G. Rossetti's 'Silent Noon': 'Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragon-fly/ Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky.'



D.G. Rossetti, 'Silent Noon': 'the dragon fly hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky.'

There is even a poem dominated by the production of rare dyes: Browning's almost incomprehensible 'Popularity':

*'Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And coloured like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells?'*

Gerard Manley Hopkins's 'As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame' is typical of the excitement, and one of the highlights of the exhibition is Ruskin's little painting of a kingfisher. Its 6 square inches makes its points more effectively than the 6,750 square inches (that's more than 46 square feet) of E.J. Poynter's prodigious *Israel in Egypt*.



John Ruskin. Kingfisher

Consumers and producers took their inspiration from the fact that in previous centuries colour was highly prominent in the arts. Surprisingly, the pure white classical statues were often originally coloured, and this is dealt with in various essays. There was an exhibition in the Ashmolean in 2015: 'Gods in colour', on polychrome in classical art.

In the nineteenth century colour invaded furniture, jewellery, wallpaper design and pottery. As the century proceeded certain colours, such as yellow, came to have resonances and associations. Yellow was the keynote of Decadence. Incidentally, *The Yellow Book*, *pace* Betjeman's poem 'The Arrest of Oscar Wilde at the Cadogan Hotel', was not the magazine Wilde was reading when he was arrested. Green was also a decadent colour, and features on the cover of the catalogue in an 1899 painting by Ramon Casas (1866-1932) (of whom I had never heard – it's shameful).



Vittoria Matteo Corcos (1859-1933) *La Morfinomane* (1899) (*The Morphine Addict*). The decadence is emphasised by the note of yellow.

There are many delightful objects in the exhibition, one of the most impressive being Turner's large painting borrowed from the Metropolitan Museum: *Venice, from the Porch of Madonna della Salute*. It would have been nice to have a big Constable, since he, famously, objected to Sir George Beaumont's stipulation that painted landscapes should resemble 'an old Cremona violin' (C.R. Leslie, *Memoirs of Constable* (1843)).

It would be possible to have an exhibition devoted exclusively to colour in landscape, a subject covered so well in Alan Staley's *Pre-Raphaelite Landscape* (1973, revised 2001), except that, absurdly, Millais's *The Blind Girl* is reproduced in monochrome. Millais corrected the double rainbow when it was pointed out that he had got the colours the wrong way round. It's a brilliant visible world, which, sadly, the blind girl cannot see.

There are so many examples, one of my favourites being Holman Hunt's stunning *Asparagus Island, Kynance Cove*. We almost didn't have this painting, since the wind took it away as Hunt was at work, as he explains:

'Luckily, a fresh gust of wind bore it aloft, until the paper was caught by a tuft of grass at the brink of the precipice. It proved to be within reach of my umbrella, which fixed it to the spot until with the help of my friend, I was able to rescue the flighty thing for completion.'



William Holman Hunt, *Asparagus Island, Kynance Cove* (1860).

In one room objects which were on display at the International Exhibition of 1862 are gathered together for the first time since, including the Minton majolica fountain, John Bell's *A Daughter of Eve* and the enormous William Burges book case, far too tall for the average house. Bell's shackled black female nude provides a splendid opportunity for a self-congratulatory Phariseism-fest. There are clothes on display, including Queen Victoria's mourning dress. Some of the items are just dreadful, of which the most salient example is a gigantic, shiny majolica peacock by Minton & Co (1873). Some objects don't quite belong such as Whistler's gloomy nocturne of *St Mark's, Venice* (1880). There are Whistlers which might have helped the argument better, such as his *Little White Girl* but it is not here.



Whistler *The Little White Girl* (1864). 'Glad but not flushed with gladness' (Swinburne).

There is a Burne-Jones stained glass window, reminding us that Victorian stained glass graces many a church, but it merely gestures towards the colossal output. What is missing, and it is a serious omission, is a full treatment of Victorian architecture, although it is true that there is only so much space in the museum. This made a gigantic break with the monochrome traditions of Palladian architecture. A key example is Leighton House, which, to adapt Wordsworth, 'held the gorgeous East in fee.' In the neo-Gothic tradition are Pugin, Butterfield, Burges and others.

We have in Oxford a prime example of Butterfield in the shape of Keble College, and I like to think that when he designed it he had Ruskin's view in mind, that the colour systems of buildings, like the skins of animals and the plumages of birds, does not necessarily following the main outlines:

'And the first broad conclusion we shall deduce from observance of natural colour in such cases will be, that it never follows form, but is arranged on an entirely separate system. What mysterious connection there may be between the shape of the spots on an animal's skin and its anatomical system, I do not know, nor even if such a connection has in anywise been traced: but to the eye the systems are entirely separate, and in many cases that of colour is accidentally variable. The stripes of a zebra do not follow the lines of its body or limbs, still less the spots of a leopard. In the plumage of birds, each feather bears a part of the pattern which is arbitrarily carried over the body, having indeed certain graceful harmonies with the form, diminishing or enlarging in directions which sometimes follow, but also not unfrequently oppose, the directions of its muscular lines. Whatever harmonies

there may be, are distinctly like those of two separate musical parts, coinciding here and there only—never discordant, but essentially different. I hold this, then, for the first great principle of architectural colour. Let it be visibly independent of form. Never paint a column with vertical lines, but always cross it.'

(The Seven Lamps of Architecture)



William Butterfield, *The Chapel, Keble College, Oxford*, where the horizontal colour systems do not correspond to the vertical design.

The drawing of Keble College on p. 44 is rather lack-lustre. One of Butterfield's major ventures in colour is All Saints, Margaret Street. Gerard Manley Hopkins admired him, and made a special point of visiting his church in Babbacombe, Devon in 1867 and 1874. In his *Journal* he makes extensive notes, commenting especially on the pulpit, 'like a church or shrine and in three storeys.'



William Butterfield. *The Pulpit in Babbacombe Church*

Many Victorian churches benefited from generous colour, and they are treated in James Stevens Curl's excellent *English Victorian Churches: Architecture, Faith & Revival* (2022) (reviewed in *Oxford Magazine*, No. 448). Rich in examples, to cite just two are Burges's St Mary's, Studley Royal and Ninian Comper's St Sepulchre's Chapel, the Crypt, St Mary Magdalen, Paddington. I'd rather see photographs of these in the exhibition than John Gibson's kitschy tinted *Venus*.

Oxford has many examples of polychrome architecture. The Chapel of my college has fan vaulting, added onto a gen-

uine hammer-beam roof, then painted by Charles Eamer Kempe, who was also the designer of a prodigious number of stained-glass windows. One Fellow of the College of an Evangelical frame of mind, Desmond Bagguley, wanted the painting removed. Much to Herbert Hart's irritation (he was the Principal) this consumed a good deal of Governing Body time.



Brasenose College Chapel, with Charles Eamer Kempe painted ceiling.

Charles Eamer Kempe lived in a Tennysonian palace of art in Lindfield. When I visited it it was owned by Sir David Hunt (1913-1998), who was responsible for the phrase 'winds of change'. The idyll was interrupted by a telephone and he ran to it quoting, 'The curse is come upon me!' ('*The Lady of Shalott*'). We went into the garden with his dog Apollo to discuss intellectual themes, punctuated by Hunt dead-heading roses with secateurs to make his points and shouting, 'Come here Apollo you stinker!'

I suppose candidates in the Examination Schools don't have concentration to spare, but there are many beautiful coloured marbles in the decorative scheme, many of which were brought by Thomas Graham Jackson from his travels. Worcester College Hall used to be decorated by William Burges, but then was 'forcibly made Wyatt again' as Pevsner says, also noting that the Fellows 'will be sorry in fifty years.' The damage was done in 1966, so what did the Fellows think in 2016? The former Provost Sir John Masterman was absolutely outraged by the improvements. The fireplace was ripped out and installed in Burges's Knightshayes Court. The Hall is now a symphony in white.



Axel Haig (1835-1921) Proposal by William Burges for the decoration of Worcester College Hall. (1873) A more modest fireplace was finally installed.



Knightshayes Court, Devon, with the fireplace from Worcester College, Oxford.

The Axel Haig illustration reminds us that he recorded a number of brightly coloured interiors, especially by William Burges, including Cardiff Castle and the Tower House in London.



Axel Haig, William Burges, The Winter Smoking Room, Cardiff Castle.



Axel Haig, William Burges, The Summer Smoking Room, Cardiff Castle.



Axel Haig. Illustration of William Burges, The Tower House, London.

In a little corner near Bishopsgate there is a gaily coloured surviving Turkish Bath (1895) by G. Harold Elphick. Incidentally, the cult of the Turkish Bath was introduced to Britain by David Urquhart (1805-1877), the father of 'Sligger' of Balliol (discussed in *Oxford Magazine*, No. 446).



G. Harold Elphick, Turkish Bath, Bishopsgate, London.

A good example of the deployment of colour is Wightwick Manor, built by the paint manufacturer Theodore Mander, who married, appropriately, Flora Paint. It was influenced by Wilde's lecture 'The House Beautiful', which he heard in Wolverhampton on 10 March 1884. It's all very well describing Wilde as a wuss and a wimp, but between January and May 1884 he gave seventy-four lectures up and down the country, including Ireland. Just think of the heroic effort!

A famous riot of colour is the Madresfield Court chapel in Worcestershire, decorated by the Birmingham School from 1902 to 1923. It is the 'original' for the chapel in *Brideshead Revisited*, to which Charles Ryder's only possible response is 'Golly'. (Chapter 1)



Madresfield Court. The Chapel.

If one pays attention to Alec Clifton Taylor's exhortation to look up when in cities one sometimes sees surprising things, such as Charles H. Worley's (1853-1906) 99A Charing Cross Road (1904) and in Dublin Conrad Dressler's Sunlight Chambers.



Conrad Dressler (1856-1940) Sunlight Chambers, Dublin, continuing Renaissance traditions. One could quote Pater's essay on Luca Della Robbia in this context: 'like fragments of the milky sky itself, fallen into the cool streets.'

In addition to colour in churches and houses there was lavish colour applied to industrial buildings, such as railways and pumping stations. Typical of the vibrant colour is the iron-work at York Station and Great Malvern station. The catalogue shows how advertisements could brighten stations (p. 20). The pumping stations are impressive cathedrals to utility. When one looks at the elaborate door fittings on the Abbey Mills Pumping Station in East London one could almost believe they were on a church or country house.



Charles Henry Driver (1832-1900) and Sir Joseph Bazalgette (1819-1891), Crossness Pumping Station (1859-1865).



Charles Henry Driver and Sir Joseph Bazalgette, Abbey Mills Pumping Station (1865-1868)



Door Fittings at Abbey Mills Pumping Station.



Stockdale Harrison, Abbey Pumping Station, Leicester (1891)

The tradition of OTT projects has continued, and a prime example of John Outram's *Temple of the Storms* on the Isle of Dogs, which Prince Charles described as 'witty and amusing.' Quite right.



John Outram, Pumping Station: Temple of the Storms (1988)

Matthew Winterbottom has missed a trick in his essay on Loïe Fuller, since she makes a cameo appearance in Yeats's 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen':

'When Loie Fuller's Chinese dancers
enwound
A shining web, a floating ribbon of
cloth,
It seemed that a dragon of air
Had fallen among dancers, had whirled
them round
Or hurried them off on its own furious
path;
So the platonic Year
Whirls out new right and wrong,
Whirls in the old instead;
All men are dancers and their tread
Goes to the barbarous clangour of a
gong.'

A museum is, perhaps, not the best place to imagine the past. It could be claimed that films are better. *The Wings of the Dove* (1997) is a case in point. Here one sees beautiful costumes recreated – actually a little later than the date of the novel, since dresses became more elegant towards the end of the Edwardian period. The characters inhabit the colourful architecture, especially Halsey Ricardo's Peacock House, built for Ernest Ridley Debenham in 1905, possibly the most spectacular example of architectural colour ever. Moving the date later also enables the characters to encounter the highly erotic Gustav Klimt: *The Kiss* (1907) and *Danae* (1907) in the Serpentine Gallery (although Klimt was not exhibited in England at that time, and the building dates from 1933-34, only opening as an art-gallery in 1970.) Here one experiences colour as it was meant to be – not as museumified fragments, but as part and parcel of a vivid and psychologically intense life. A life we are now never going to be able to manage in such a comprehensive manner, so deluged with banality and ugliness – alas.



In the key of blue: Milly Theale (Alison Elliott) at the Debenham House (the Peacock House) in *The Wings of the Dove* (1997). An image of an unachievable life.



Halsey Ricardo, *The Peacock House* (1905)

In the 'forties when I was growing up in the Black Country Victorian dinge clung on; it took time for us to reach the twentieth century, but brightened sometimes by splashes of colour. A trip to Tintagel in July 1945, with its vision of opalescent seas, was a revelation. In the cinder paths round Dudley there were fragments of fluid jewels in the form of melted Blue John from Derbyshire, which had been used as flux in the blast furnaces.



Blue John

In the hospital where I was recovering from a broken leg I encountered my first pop-song, the very latest thing on the Hit Parade: 'I want some red roses for a blue lady, Mr. florist take my order please', and it was a bright mental moment, especially since I thought the lady was literally blue. (Listen to the original John Laurenz version, with its intro, not the horrible Dean Martin or, worse, Frank Sinatra.) My father sprayed the boringly grey Morris 12 a beautiful turquoise, using an adapted vacuum cleaner, and the caravan he had built was in the matching colour. So we were all ready, to use Browning's phrase, to encounter the 'spot of joy' in Neuchâtel.

BERNARD RICHARDS

A Different Path

'I do not seek. I find.' (Pablo Picasso)

Suddenly starting out
in one direction

with an open map
and careful planning

you stop mid-way
to think the better of it,

retrace your steps
to where you began

then on impulse
follow a different path

determined this time
at least to go the distance,

telling yourself
that forethought is impediment,

that not to seek
will be the surest way to find.

For my Next Trick

The prestidigitation
of a loose imagination
invites your steady hand to take a card
and then to put it back
into the shuffled pack
while both of you are concentrating hard.

So celebrate confusion,
misdirection and illusion,
the loss before the taking of control
as all experience shows
that whatever card you chose
returns the individual to the whole.

JOHN MOLE

John Mole lives in Hertfordshire where for many years he taught and ran The Mandeville Press with Peter Scupham. He has written poetry for children and adults, as well as literary journalism, and plays regularly as a jazz clarinettist. His most recent collection is *Keeping in Step* (Shoestring Press, 2023).

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